



**TRUSTEE James Li** MBA CPA CMA

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May 12, 2020

**Dear Don Valley North Community Members**

I would like to thank parents, staff, and community representatives for attending our first virtual TDSB Don Valley North Ward Forum and Round Table on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It was a productive opportunity to collaborate with different voices when discussing strategies to improve our education system during these challenging times. I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to parents, students, staff, and most importantly, our frontline workers for your service and perseverance.

I would like to especially thank Minister of Education Stephen Lecce for taking time to speak to our community about what the Province of Ontario is doing to support public education during the COVID-19 crisis and agreeing to answer questions that are sent by our community. I would also like to thank MPP Vincent Ke and Councillor Shelley Carroll for attending the meeting to speak to our community as well.

Many parents spoke up during the meeting and provided invaluable thoughts and suggestion that the TDSB leverage to improve the education that we deliver to our students. Some of the most consistent themes we heard were the need for more consistent and effective online learning, and the need to ensure that our students attain the necessary knowledge to successfully advance to the next grade/phase of education in the next school year.

I am pleased to let everyone know that, on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the TDSB's Board of Trustees passed motion to "continue to facilitate discussions with all employee groups and seek feedback from parents and students to determine best practices for ensuring meaningful, consistent, interactive remote engagement and learning between educators and students, among students, and between parents/caregivers and teachers". We will be reviewing this progress in a Special Meeting each week to ensure that the TDSB is on track to do what we can and in the most effective way for all of our students.

Please see below for the meeting minutes of our meeting let me know if you have any questions or comments. I look forward to hearing on your thoughts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "James Li".

**James Li**  
Trustee, Ward 13 Don Valley North



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**Meeting Date/Time:** May 7, 2020 6:30PM

**Meeting Location:** WebEX Online Meeting hosted by Trustee James Li

**Number of Attendees:** Approx. 100 participants (90 community members)

**Community Representatives:** Hon. Stephen Lecce (Minister of Education), Hon. Vincent Ke (Member of Provincial Parliament), Shelley Carroll (City Councillor), Robin Pilkey (Chair of the TDSB), James Li (TDSB Trustee), Aretha Phillips (PIAC Representative)

**Staff Members:** Dr. Brendan Browne (Executive Superintendent of Education), Audley Salmon (Superintendent of Education), Elizabeth Addo (Superintendent of Education), Mark Sprack (Superintendent of Education), Kiki Zhang (Trustee's Office Shared Services Liaison), Tania Jabbar (Trustee's Office Shared Services Liaison)

### Meeting Minutes:

#### 1. Message from the Ontario Minister of Education

- a) Minister Stephen Lecce emphasized that the province is still working on a plan for the rest of the school year guided by the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- b) The province is prioritizing the safety of students and staff, and promises a deep cleaning of schools to ensure that risks are minimized.
- c) The province is continuing to work on more resources for students with exceptionalities in the Learn at Home online platform.
- d) The province is working on bringing more technology for students and families who cannot access it at the moment.
- e) The province is continuing to provide financial assistance for parents with young children.
- f) The province is working with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to ensure that students will be on track to graduate.
- g) Although decisions are yet to be made regarding the timeline for students to return to school, the Minister is speaking with MPP Vincent Ke about what the community wants to see more of for the continuity of education in a safe setting.

#### 2. The following questions emerged from a roundtable community discussion:

##### 2.1 Questions to the Province of Ontario (To be sent to MPP Vincent Ke for redirection to Minister Stephen Lecce)

- a) Will the Ministry provide more funding for technology to school boards to replace those that were given away during the pandemic?

- b) Will there be more online video-enabled classes in the new Learn at Home platform?
- c) How would teacher performance be monitored to ensure that curriculum expectations are met?
- d) What kind of recovery plans are in place post-COVID 19 for our education system?

2.2 Questions for the Toronto District School Board (To be taken by Trustee James Li for discussion at the TDSB Board)

- a) Is there any forward planning happening with the TDSB, Ministry, schools, teachers/unions? What plans are in place for the new school year in September regardless of what the situation will be? When can these plans be shared with communities?

*Response from James Li:* TDSB staff, under the leadership of the Director of Education, is working on a number of contingency plans for a number of scenarios that may likely occur. The scenario may be a return to school in June, or September, or even continued shut downs into September and beyond. I will share any information from these plans I receive as they become available.

- b) Going forward, does the TDSB have a plan to develop full-fledged online education as an alternative?

*Response from James Li:* The Ministry of Education have recently legislated that high school students will be required to take a number of online classes as a prerequisite to graduation. Although the TDSB has an existing online education program that students can elect to pursue, this new legislation will require us to develop a more comprehensive online education strategy. We will be working with the Ministry of Education going forward to ensure that the most effective strategy is developed and we hope to receive the necessary support that we will need from the Ministry.

- c) Is there a possibility for graduations to be postponed rather than cancelled?

*Response from James Li:* Graduation ceremonies will not be able to take place during Ontario's COVID-19 shut down. Once the shut-downs are lifted, schools are encouraged to commence graduation ceremonies if it is their wish to do so.

- d) How will potential delays in the IPRC process affect my child's placement?

*Response from James Li:* There were a number of questions surrounding the IPRC process for individual students. All of these questions and requests were referred to TDSB staff and are in the process of being resolved.

- e) Will there be online schooling for Grade 9 and 10 credits?

*Response from James Li:* Although high school students are learning at home, and some are following their regular time-table and curriculum, all final grades this year will be based on the students' mid-term performance. However, grades may be adjusted upwards if teachers observe an improvement in a student's work while learning at home.

f) Will online learning be extended to the summer?

*Response from James Li:* Summer school will be conducted remotely should the province's shutdown continue into the summer.

g) How will co-op students be affected?

*Response from James Li:* This was a question on a specific situation for a specific student. The question has been addressed by staff.

### **3. The following themes emerged from a roundtable community discussion:**

#### 3.1 The standardization of all learning

- a) Parents demand a policy or performance expectation for teachers to conduct online learning to ensure consistency and accountability.
- b) Concerns about gaps in student learning for next grade.
- c) There is insufficient teacher engagement for prompt feedback to student questions/concerns, scaffolding and guiding learning.
- d) Specific guidelines/routines must be set up for teachers to follow up with students.
- e) There is not enough support being given to students with special needs.
- f) There is not enough focus on other subjects such as Social Studies, Science, and French.
- g) Parents need more resources to support their children during at-home learning.
- h) There must be consistent professional development opportunities for teachers to improve online teaching.
- i) Issues with students relying on newcomer parents to help complete homework.

#### 3.2 The importance of routine

- a) Well-being is being negatively affected by the lack of routine in online learning and reduced teacher-student engagement.
- b) Parents and students demand routine video calls with teachers and classmates.
- c) Perhaps routine for online learning would allow students to learn all subjects.
- d) Ideas for following a routine similar to a regular school day.

### **4. The following responses were offered by staff members:**

- a) A working committee is being established to develop a structure where learning at home is a part of everyday life.
- b) Staff encourage continued discussions where 'best practices' should be shared among schools.
- c) The Board is currently revising expectations for staff and moving to second phase.
- d) The current focus in online learning is literacy and numeracy.



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- e) The Board is working on synchronized teaching and understanding how much and when to engage.
- f) The wellbeing of students and their families need to be taken into consideration when planning for online learning.
- g) The Board is continuing to work on strategies and solutions for students with IEPs.

**END OF MEETING**